

LEGENDARY 1950s EC COMICS!

IMPACT



NO. 14
DEC

SHOCK



2.00
2.75
CANADA



SUSPENSE STORIES



JOLTING TALES OF
TENSION
IN THE
EC TRADITION!

The ORPHAN

WELL, IT'S ALL OVER NOW. EVERYTHING WORKED OUT SWELL. BUT FOR A WHILE BACK THERE, IT LOOKED PRETTY BAD. I WAS AWFUL UNHAPPY. I USED TO CRY MYSELF TO SLEEP AT NIGHT. GOLLY, THERE WERE TIMES WHEN ALL I WANTED TO DO WAS CRY UP AND DIE. I WAS SO MISERABLE. WHY I... I... OH, SEE? I HAVEN'T EVEN TOLD YOU WHO I AM. MY NAME'S LUCY... LUCY JOHNSON. I'M TEN YEARS OLD AND IN THE FOURTH GRADE. AND LIKE I SAID UP TO A FEW WEEKS AGO, I WAS MISERABLE. IT WAS MY PARENTS. THEY WERE AWFUL TO ME. YOU SEE, MY DADDY WAS AN ALCOHOLIC...

SAM? YOU'RE DRUNK AGAIN!

SWO WHAT? WHAT ELSE? 'MAE I GOT IN LIFE? SOME I'M DRUNK! I LIKE T'GET DRUNK! I... I... SWIFT! WHAT'S SHE DOIN' UP THIRN TIME OF NIGHT? SET T' BED, YUH LIL' WHAT? WHASH YUH STARIN' AT? HUNT HUNT!

I HEARD YOU COME IN, DADDY! I WANTED TO SEE IF YOU WERE ALL RIGHT!



DADDY WAS TERRIBLE WHEN HE WAS DRUNK. HE USED TO BEAT ME...

YER JUS' LIKE YER MOTHER ALWAYS BASSIN'! ALWAYS LECTURIN' ME? WELL, I'M ALL RIGHT. SHEE? NOW, SET T' BED...

OWWWW!

SOB SOB

AND MOM AND DAD USED TO ARGUE ALL THE TIME, MOSTLY ABOUT ME...

CARTOONS KEEP TALKING ABOUT **BEING IN BED** WHEN SHE'S SUPPOSED TO BE IN BED? WHAT KIND OF A MOTHER ARE YOU, ANYWAY, MILLIE?

WELL, A MOTHER WASN'T BY IDEA! IT WAS FOURS! I NEVER...



MOM NEVER WANTED ME, I GUESS. AND SHE'D ALWAYS BRING IT UP WHEN SHE AND DAD WOULD ARGUE. SHE'D ALWAYS BLAME HIM...

AND IF YOU'D BEEN SOBER, INSTEAD OF STINKIN' DRUNK...

WELL THAT'S YOUR TIGHT LUCK. SO NOW THAT YOU GOT 'ER... TAKE CARE OF 'ER! IT'S YOUR DUTY!



AND YOUR DUTY IS TO BE A RESPECTABLE DECENT HUSBAND AND FATHER INSTEAD OF A DIRTY SLOPPY DRUNKEN BUM!

SOR... SOR... I TOL YOU T GET T BED!



LEAVE HER ALONE, SAM!

YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS, MILLIE! IF YOU CAN'T TEACH HER DISCIPLINE, I WILL!

NO! NO! PLEASE, DADDY! DON'T HIT ME...



LIKE I SAID, DADDY WAS AWFUL WHEN HE WAS DRUNK. HE USED TO BEAT ME BLACK AND BLUE...

TAKE THAT, Y'LL! BRAT... AND THAT...

SAM! FOR GOD'S SAKE...



AND LIKE I SAID, SOMETIMES I USED TO GIVE MYSELF TO SLEEP AT NIGHT... LISTENING TO THEM DOWNSTAIRS... YELLING AND SCREAMING...

SOR... SOR... I'LL DO WHAT I LIKE...

YOU'LL BE A MOTHER TO THAT BRAT! THAT'S WHAT YOU'LL DO!



AND SOMETIMES I'D JUST WANTED TO CURL UP AND DIE...

WELL, IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE JOB I'M DOING, WHY DON'T YOU DIVORCE ME? WE'LL GET HER A NEW MOTHER!

YOU'D LIKE THAT WOULDN'T YOU? YOU'D LIKE TO BE FREE AGAIN? WELL, YOU'RE NOT GETTING AWAY THAT EASY, MILLIE!



I HATED THEM! I HATED THEM BOTH! I DON'T KNOW WHO I HATED MORE... DADDY, BECAUSE HE BEAT ME AND YELLED AT ME AND CAME HOME DRUNK ALL THE TIME... OR MOM, BECAUSE SHE NEVER WANTED ME AND NEVER SHOWED ME ANY LOVE AND WAS WILLING TO GIVE ME UP... JUST LIKE THAT!



ONCE, I RAN AWAY. I RAN AWAY TO MY MOTHER'S SISTER'S HOUSE, WAY ACROSS TOWN...



WHY, LUCY?

SOB, SOB... AUNT KATE.

I POURED OUT MY HEART TO AUNT KATE. I TOLD HER THE WHOLE STORY...



AND, SOB... I'M SO UNHAPPY, AUNT KATE... SO TERRIBLY UNHAPPY!

WHY, YOU POOR BEAR CHILD!

PLEASE LET ME STAY HERE WITH YOU, AUNT KATE! PLEASE? YOU LOVE ME, DON'T YOU?

OF COURSE I LOVE YOU, DEAR... BUT... WELL... I'LL TALK TO THEM!



I REMEMBER THE DAY AUNT KATE CAME TO TALK TO MOMMY AND DADDY...



...IT'S BETTER TO THE CHILD, WILLIE. I CAN GIVE HER THE LOVE AND AFFECTION SHE CRAVES! LET ME ADOPT HER!

IF YOU WANT THE SOB, YOU CAN HAVE HER, KATE!

NO YOU DON'T, WILLORED! YOU'VE NOT GONNA PULL ANY FAST ONES!

MOMMY WAS MORE THAN GLAD TO GET RID OF ME, BUT DADDY WOULDN'T HEAR OF IT. I CRIED SO...

THAT BRAT STAYS HERE! SHE BELONGS WITH HER NATURAL MOTHER. NO DRIED UP OLD MAID'S GONNA BRING UP MY KID!

PLEASE, DADDY! PLEASE LET ME GO LIVE WITH AUNTIE KATE!

WELL, NOW YOU COULD YOUR?



YOU KEEP OUT OF THIS, KATE! HE'S JUST BEING SPITEFUL, KATE! I'M SORRY!

THIS IS BETWEEN WILLIE AND ME. IT'S NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS. THE BRAT STAYS! AN WILLIE TAKES CARE OF HER LIKE A MOTHER SHOULD!

I'M NOT SORRY FOR EITHER OF YOU, WILLIE. I'M SORRY FOR LUCY!



DADDY WOULDN'T *GIVE* HIS *CONSENT*, AND SO I COULDN'T *GO* AND *LIVE* WITH AUNTIE KATE. THAT'S ALL THERE WAS *TO* IT! AND THEN DADDY STARTED DRINKING WORSE... SOMETIMES HE WOULDN'T COME HOME AT ALL... FOR DAYS...

WHERE'RE YOU *GOING*, MOMMY?

I'M GOING *OUT*, LUCY! YOU... TO LOOK FOR YOUR FATHER!



ONE NIGHT, AFTER DADDY HADN'T COME HOME AND MOMMY WENT OUT 'LOOKING', I WOKE UP TO THE SOUND OF SOFT GENTLE VOICES DOWNSTAIRS. I TIPPED OUT OF MY ROOM. MOM WAS DOWN THERE IN THE HALL, SAYING GOOD-NIGHT TO SOMEBODY...

WHEN WILL I SEE YOU AGAIN, BABY?

I'LL CALL YOU, STEVE!



AFTER HE'S LEFT, MOMMY TURNED. SHE LOOKED SO PRETTY. ALL SMILES. I'D NEVER SEEN HER LOOK LIKE THAT.



WHO'S STEVE, MOMMY?

LUCY! WHY AIN'T YOU SLEEPING?



WHO'S STEVE, MOMMY?

MOMMY MET A VERY NICE MAN, DEAR. WE BECAME... VERY GOOD FRIENDS. HE... HE JUST BROUGHT ME HOME.



DOES DADDY KNOW STEVE, MOMMY?

ER... NO, DEAR! YOUR FATHER DOESN'T *KNOW* ABOUT HIM! YOU' WON'T TELL HIM, *WILL* YOU? AT LEAST, *NOT* YET!



WHY NOT?

BECAUSE DEAR. *BEFORE* MOMMY WILL *MARRY* STEVE! MOMMY ISN'T *SURE*! MOMMY WANTS TO *MAKE* UP HER *MIND*! YOU WON'T *TELL* DADDY ABOUT HIM UNTIL MOMMY IS *SURE*. *WILL* YOU?



WILL I MEET HIM, MOMMY?
WILL I MEET STEVE?

WE'LL SEE, DEAR.
NOW RUN A LONG
UP TO BED!



LATER, I HEARD MOMMY CALL STEVE ON THE TELEPHONE...

YOU CAN COME HERE NOW, STEVE.
LUCY KNOWS ALL ABOUT YOU.
THERE'S NO USE TRYING TO HIDE
IT FROM HER ANY LONGER! BESIDES,
SHE WANTS TO MEET YOU!

YES! YES! WELL,
WE CAN'T AFFORD TO
TAKE ANY CHANCES!



THE NEXT TIME DADDY DIDN'T COME
HOME, STEVE CAME TO THE HOUSE.
MOMMY LET ME STAY UP...

WELL, WELL! SO
THIS IS LITTLE
LUCY! SAY,
AREN'T YOU A
PRETTY LITTLE
GIRL!

HE'S YES,
NICE, I DEAR!
MOMMY!



STEVE WAS VERY SWEET TO ME. HE
PATTED MY HEAD AND SMILED AND
TOLD ME A STORY...

...SO THE PRINCE AND
THE PRINCESS LIVED
HAPPILY EVER
AFTER!

ALL RIGHT,
DEAR! TIME
FOR BED!



HE EVEN KISSED ME GOOD-NIGHT...

I WISH, KITTEN, AN
HERE'S SOMETHING FOR
TOMORROW & DINE...
FOR CANDY!

SEE! THANKS
STEVE!
YOU'RE
SWEET!



STEVE MADE ME SO HAPPY I LIED TO
LIE AWAKE AND THINK OF HOW NICE IT WOULD
BE IF HE WERE MY REAL FATHER...

YOU'D BETTER GO,
STEVE! IT'S LATE!

OKAY, DADDY! CALL
ME THE NEXT TIME
THE COAST IS CLEAR.



AND MOMMY... MOMMY WAS SO DIFFERENT TOO. SHE'D
CHANGED SINCE SHE'D MET STEVE.

I WISH, MOMMY!

GOOD NIGHT, DEAR! AND
REMEMBER! STEVE IS
OUR SECRET. YOURS AND
MINE! YOU MUSTN'T TELL
A SOUL! NOT EVEN DADDY!



AND WHEN DADDY WOULD COME HOME DRUNK AND SWEARING AND TREAT ME BAD, I DON'T CARE. I JUST THOUGHT OF MOMMY AND STEVE AND HOW THEY'D WORK THINGS OUT AFTER A WHILE AND THAT IT WOULDN'T BE LIKE THIS FOR ALMOS-

"WASH YUH LADDER! YES... AT YUH DUMB DIBBY DADDY! BRAT? E'WAR, SCRAM! I'M ALONE! GO T' BED!"



AND THEN, ONE NIGHT, I AWOKE TO THE SOUND OF VOICES... MUF- FLED VOICES... COMING FROM MOMMY'S BEDROOM...

"THAT'S STEVE'S VOICE! BUT WHY IS HE WHISPERING? HE NEVER WHISPERS WHEN HE COMES HERE..."



I REMEMBER HOW I TIP-TOED TO MOMMY'S ROOM AND PEEKED IN THROUGH THE SLIGHTLY OPEN DOOR...

BOLLY MOMMY'S FADING? AND STEVE IS HELPING? Y'EAR, SO LUCY WILL BE ARTFULLY DISAPPOINTED!



I LISTENED, MY HEART BEATING WILDLY IN MY CHEST...

NOTHING! ONLY... WELL... IT'S JUST THAT SHE REALLY BELIEVED YOU'D BE HER NEW DADDY! SHE LIKES YOU A LOT!

LOOK! IT WAS FOUR IDEA TO PLAY UP TO HER. YOU KNOW HOW I HATE KIDS. LET HER OLD MAN HAVE HER!



THEY WEREN'T TAKING ME? THEY WERE RUNNING AWAY AND THEY WEREN'T TAKING ME...

LOOK, STEVE. THIS IS THE WAY WE PLANNED IT. I'M NOT SAYING ANYTHING. YOU KNOW HOW I FELT ABOUT LUCY... EVER SINCE THE BEGINNING? I CAN'T STAND KIDS MYSELF!

THEN STOP FEELING SORRY FOR HER AND LET'S GO, BEFORE YOUR HUSBAND SHOWS UP!



I REMEMBER HOW I HAD TO CLAP MY HANDS OVER MY MOUTH TO KEEP FROM CRYING OUT LOUD... HOW I RAN DOWN THE HALL AND PLUNGED MYSELF ON THE BED AND LISTENED TO THEM FARG OUTSIDE MY ROOM AND GO DOWNSTAIRS.

SOB... SOB...



I REMEMBER LISTENING TO THE FRONT DOOR SLAM AND RUNNING TO THE FRONT BEDROOM WINDOW IN TIME TO SEE

DADDY! DADDY'S COMING UP THE WALK!



I REMEMBER HOW HE STARED AT THEM... AT MOMMY AND STEVE... WITH THE BAGS IN THEIR HANDS... HOW HE STARTED TO SPEAK... HOW THE BURNING EXPLODED INTO THE NIGHT... HOW DADDY'S EXPRESSION FROZE...



...HOW HE PITCHED FORWARD WITH THE BULLETHOLE IN HIS CHEST AND THE BLOOD GUSHING FROM IT AND POOLING OUT OVER THE FRONT WALK AS HE WENT SPRAWLING...



...HOW MOMMY SCREAMED... AND FAINTED...



...AND STEVE DROPPED THE BAGS AND RAN...



...AND THE POLICE SIREN WAILED FAR AWAY, COMING CLOSER... CLOSER... AS I CAME OUT THE FRONT DOOR...



THEY FOUND THE SMILING MOMMY'S HAND, AND ME CRYING OVER MY DADDY'S BODY AS THEY DROVE UP IN THE SQUAD CAR...



BUT AN AMBULANCE WASN'T WHAT THEY NEEDED, DADDY WAS DEAD, THEY NEEDED A MORGUE-BAGGON. MOMMY CAME TO AND ASKED



THEY CAUGHT STEVE A FEW DAYS LATER OUTSIDE CHICAGO AND SNIPPED HIM BACK TO STAND TRIAL...ALONG WITH MOMMY.

FOR THE MALICIOUS AND PRE-MEDITATED MURDER OF SAMUEL JOHNSON... AND THE STATE WILL PROVE, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN OF THE JURY, THAT IT WAS MURDER COMMITTED OUT OF NEED... OUT OF DESIRE... GOLD AND CALCULATING...



THE TRIAL WAS SHORT AND SWEET. THEY CALLED ME TO THE WITNESS STAND AND I TOLD THEM WHAT I'D BEEN...

DADDY WAS JUST COMING UP THE WALK WHEN THEY CAME OUT. HE SAW THEIR BASS. HE WAS SO MAD AND THEN... BOOM... THE SHOT... BOOM...



AND THE JURY BROUGHT IN THEIR VERDICT AFTER TWO HOURS...

WE FIND THE DEFENDANTS GUILTY AS CHARGED!



IN OUR STATE, MURDERERS DIE IN THE ELECTRIC CHAIR. MOMMY WENT FIRST.



THEN STEVE...



SO LIKE I SAID IN THE BEGINNING... EVERYTHING WORKED OUT SWELL. I LIVE IN A NICE HOUSE NOW, WITH NICE FURNITURE. I HAVE ALL THE TOYS I WANT AND ALL THE LOVE I NEED. YOU SEE, THE COURT SENT ME TO LIVE WITH AUNT KATE...



...WHICH IS JUST THE WAY I'D HOPED IT WOULD WORK OUT WHEN I SHOT DADDY FROM THE FRONT BEDROOM WINDOW WITH THE GUN I KNEW WAS IN THE NIGHT TABLE AND WENT DOWNSTAIRS AND PUT THE GUN IN MOMMY'S HAND AND STARTED THE CRYING ACT...



The WHIPPING

HE WAS A MIDDLE-AGED MAN, SLIGHTLY BALDING. HE STOOD BELOW THE BLARING STREET LAMP, NERVOUSLY SMOKING CIGARETTE AFTER CIGARETTE. FROM TIME TO TIME HE'D PEER INTO THE DARK NIGHT, UP AND DOWN THE DESERTED STREET, AS IF HE WERE EXPECTING SOMEONE OR SOMETHING. HE'D LISTEN FOR A MOMENT, CURSE SOFTLY TO HIMSELF, SHIFT THE WHITE ROSE AND MODO HE'D BEEN HOLDING FROM ONE ARM TO THE OTHER, AND THEN CONTINUE TO ABSENTLY ROLL AND UNROLL THE THICK LEATHER STRAP HE'D BROUGHT ALONG FOR THE WHIPPING. AND AS HE FONDLED THE STRAP, HIS MOUTH DROVE INTO A TIGHT LINE, AND HIS FACE GAVE UPON, AND A LOOK OF HATE SHOWN IN HIS ANGRY, ANGRY EYES...

*JUST YOU WAIT, WE'RE COMING!
IN A LITTLE WHILE, YOU'LL GET
FOURS, YOU LITTLE SUCK, I'LL
TEACH YOU TO PLAY AROUND WITH
MY DAUGHTER...*

HE STOOD IN THE LONELY, EMPTY NIGHT, HARBORING HIS FURY AND HIS HATE, AND HE THOUGHT ABOUT HIS DAUGHTER CRYING HER EYES OUT, AND SCREAMING...

*BUT I LOVE HIM,
DAD! DON'T YOU
UNDERSTAND?
I LOVE HIM!*

*LOVE HIM? WELL, FOR-
GET ABOUT IT! NO
DAUGHTER OF MINE'S
GOING TO RUN AROUND
WITH NO BREAD-
NERICAN.*

HE'D TRIED TO DISCOURAGE HER FROM SEEING THE BOY. HE'D EVEN THREATENED HER...

*YOU SO HEAR THAT HOUSE
AGAIN AND SO HELP ME, I'LL
TAN YOUR MIDE! DO YOU
HEART PROMISE ME?
PROMISE ME YOU WON'T
SEE HIM AGAIN!*

*I... I CAN'T
PROMISE YOU...
DAD... I WON'T
DAD... I LOVE
HIM!*

AND THEN HE REMEMBERED THE BEGINNING OF IT... SIX MONTHS AGO... WHEN THE SPANISH CATHOLIC FAMILY MOVED INTO THE HOUSE DOWN THE BLOCK.



SPICKS! FROM DOWNTOWN!

THEY'LL ALL BE MOVIN' UP, NOW! THE NEIGHBORHOOD'LL BE RUINED.

...HOW HE AND TWO OF HIS NEIGHBORS HAD GOTTEN TOGETHER



WE GOTTA DISCOURAGE 'EM. WE GOTTA KEEP 'EM WHERE THEY BELONG!

LET ONE OF 'EM OPEN THE GATE, AND THEY'LL ALL POOR THROUGH!

WE GOTTA SHUT IT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE...

...HOW THEY'D DECIDED...



WHAT WE NEED IS A VIGILANTE SOCIETY YOU KNOW? A GROUP THAT PROTECTS OUR INTERESTS!

WE COULD ALL BELONG! NO ONE WOULD KNOW OUR IDENTITY.

WE COULD WEAR HOODS...



AND WE COULD STOP THOSE BETTY SPICKS IN THEIR TRACKS...

THEN IT'S AGREED? WE FORM A GROUP AND WE DRIVE 'EM OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD?

YEAH!



HE REMEMBERED HOW THE THREE OF THEM HAD APPROACHED OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY...



WHEN WE GET ENOUGH SUITS, WE'LL BURN A CROSS ON THEIR LAWN... IF THAT DON'T CONVINCE 'EM, WE'LL KICK 'EM ONE NIGHT AND TAKE 'EM OUT AN' WHIP 'EM. WHA'D'YA SAY, GEORGE?

I... I DON'T KNOW, BOYS. I'M ALL FOR KEEPING THEM OUT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD... BUT A HOODED SOCIETY? I DON'T KNOW...

...AND NOW, ALTHOUGH THE SPARK WAS THERE, THEY'D BEEN UNABLE TO FIN IT INTO A BURNING FIRE...



CRAPES! WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU SAUS? DO YOU WANT TO SEE YOUR KIDS PLAYIN' WITH THEIR KIDS... YOUR DAUGHTERS GOIN' OUT WITH THEIR BOYS?

AN, THEY BEEN KEEPIN' PRETTY MUCH TO THEMSELVES, ED. BESIDES... IT'S ONLY ONE FAMILY! THEY'RE NOT MORTEN' ANYBODY!

YES, THE SPANISH PEOPLE HAD MOVED IN AND, ALTHOUGH HE AND HIS FRIENDS HAD TRIED HARD TO WHIP THE NEIGHBORHOOD INTO ACTION, THEY'D REMAINED... UNMOLESTED...



HE REMEMBERED HOW HE'D COMPLAINED TO HIS WIFE...



HE REMEMBERED HOW AMY, HIS DAUGHTER, HAD COME HOME ONE NIGHT AND ANNOUNCED HAPPILY...



...AND HOW SHE'D LOOKED AT HIM AS IF SHE'D SEEN HER FATHER FOR THE FIRST TIME...



...HOW SHE'D CROSSED HER ARMS DEFIANTLY...



AND THEN HE REMEMBERED HOW, MONTHS LATER, HE'D COME HOME LATE FROM THE OFFICE ONE NIGHT... AND AS HE'D PASSED *THAT* HOUSE, HE'D SEEN...



THEY'D BEEN *KISSING*... ON THE STEPS... HIS DAUGHTER, AND ONE OF *THEM*... ONE OF THOSE *SPICKS*...



HE REMEMBERED HOW HE HAD FELT HIS BLOOD RUN HOT... POUNDING INTO HIS FACE... CARRYING WITH IT THE COLOR OF HIS FURY... ANGRY RED... PURPLE RAGE...



I... I HAVE TO GO NOW,
LOUIS. GOOD-BYE...

I'LL... SEE YOU,
AMY!

ALL THE WAY HOME, HIS RAGE HAD SEETHED WITHIN HIM. HE'D KISSED HER! HE OF THE OLIVE SKIN AND THE RAVEN HAIR HAD DARED TO TOUCH HIS WHITE, WHITE DAUGHTER... BY THE TIME THEY'D REACHED THE HOUSE, HE'D EXPLODED...



I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO KEEP
AWAY FROM SPICES? IS THIS THE
WAY YOU OBEY YOUR FATHER?
ANSWER ME!

LOUIS IS VERY SWEET,
DADDY! I LOVE HIM
A LOT!

HE'D SHOUTED AT HER...



I DON'T CARE!
I FORBID YOU
TO SPEAK TO HIM
AGAIN! DO YOU
HEAR?

I'M EIGHTEEN,
DADDY! I'M
OLD ENOUGH
TO DECIDE FOR
MYSELF WHO I
SPEAK TO

AND THEN, HE'D SEEN RED. HE'D LASHED OUT, STRIKING HER...

AS LONG AS YOU'RE
LIVING IN MY HOUSE,
I'LL DECIDE WHO YOU'LL
SPEAK TO...



OWWWW
OWWWW
OWWWW

AND SHE'D CRIED AND SOBBED...

BUT I LOVE HIM,
DADDY! DON'T YOU
UNDERSTAND?
I LOVE HIM!

NO DAUGHTER
OF MINE'S
GOING TO RUN
AROUND WITH
NO BREAD!
MEXICAN.



HE'D TRIED TO DISCOURAGE HER. HE'D THREATENED HER. BUT TO NO AVAIL... ONE NIGHT, AMY'D COME HOME AFTER THREE IN THE MORNING...



YOU WERE OUT WITH HIM AGAIN,
WEREN'T YOU? THAT MARTINEZ?
THAT SPICK!

I WAS OUT WITH
LOUIS, YES!

AND SO, HE'D MADE UP HIS MIND...



I'VE GOT TO GET RID OF THAT MARTINEZ.
I'VE GOT TO MAKE THAT BLASTED SPICK
FAMILY MOVE AWAY! BUT HOW? HOW?

THE OTHER
GUYS AROUND
WON'T HELP!
THEY'RE NOT
EVEN JANGY!
THEY'RE...
THEY'RE...

...AND THEN HE'D THOUGHT OF A WAY TO GET THE NEIGHBORHOOD MEN ANGRY... ANGRY ENOUGH TO ACT...

SO HE'D DONE TO THEM... ONE AT A TIME. HE'D PICKED THE ONES WITH DAUGHTERS, FIRST. THEY'D BE THE EASIEST TO KILL. AND HE'D COMBED HIS WELL-PLANNED STORY...



THAT'S RIGHT? LAST NIGHT, ARY, MY DAUGHTER, CAME HOME CRYING HER EYES OUT. I TRIED TO MAKE HER TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED. AT FIRST SHE WOULDNA'K. SHE SAID SHE WAS TOO ASHAMED...

HE'D COME FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, ASKING FOR THE MEN, SPEAKING TO THEM ALONE, TELLING THEM EACH HIS SHOCKING NEWS...

...THEN, I FINALLY GOT IT! WHAT? OUT OF HER. SHE WAS PASSION THAT SPICK HOUSE LAST NIGHT, AND THE BOY... THAT LOUIS... HE GRABBED HER...



...ANGERING THEM... FRIGHTENING THEM. STIRRING THEM INTO ACTUAL PRODDING THEM TOWARD VIOLENCE...

...HE CALLED MY LITTLE FOR GOD'S SAKE, ED. FOR GOD'S SAKE, ED. THINGS WITH HIS MARRIE HE PROBABLY WOULD HAVE DONE WORSE IF SHE HADN'T FOUGHT HIM OFF.



AND THIS EVENING, HE'D SORTED THEM ALL TOGETHER... SMOCKED MEN TO WHOM HE'D TOLD HIS SHOCKING LIES...



SOME OF YOU HAVE DAUGHTERS OF YOUR OWN? ARE WE GOING TO WAIT UNTIL SOMETHING WORSE HAPPENS? ARE WE GOING TO LET THEM START COMIN' UP HERE UNTIL IT ISN'T SAFE FOR OUR WOMEN-FOLK TO WALK THE STREETS ALONE? ARE WE...

WHAT ARE WE WAITING FOR?

SO THEY'D AGREED AT LAST TO ACT... TO BAND TOGETHER... TO HIDE BEHIND FELLOW CASE HOODS AND RED-SHEET ROBES AND DRIVE THE INTRUDER FROM THEIR STREET...



WE'LL MEET AT TWO A.M. IN THE CORNER. BRING STRAPS... GLOVES... ANYTHING WE'LL NEED TO DO IT.

LET'S GO! WE'VE ALL GOT WORK TO DO! AND NOT A WORD... TO ANY-ONE, NOT EVEN THE WOMEN!

NOW HE STOOD BELOW THE GLARING STREET LAMP, HIS ROBE AND HOOD WITH THE CRUELLY CUT EYE-HOLES IN ONE HAND, A BURNED DOWN CIGARETTE IN THE OTHER, FEEDING INTO THE BLACKNESS... LISTENING.



IT'S ALMOST TIME? THEY SHOULD BE HERE... ANY MINUTE... ANY MINUTE...

AND THEN THEY STARTED TO APPEAR... THE OTHERS... THE ANGRY MEN, WITH THEIR WHIPS AND BLACKJACKS AND ROPES AND SACKS... AND THEIR RED-SHEET COSTUMES, WHITE AND PURE... LIKE THE WHITE AND PURE THING THEY WERE ABOUT TO DO...



EVERYBODY'S HERE? GAY! LET'S PUT ON OUR HOODS. AND REMEMBER! NO TALKING! NO NAMES!

THEY MOVED THROUGH THE DESERTED STREETS, LIKE GHOSTS...PHANTOM FIGURES ON A PHANTOM MISSION. FOR ISN'T THE BASIS OF MOST HATRED AND INTOLERANCE BUT FANTASY...



THIS IS THE HOUSE? EVERYBODY FAMILIAR WITH THE PLAN?

WE BREAK IN AND GO THROUGH THE BEDROOMS? WE DRAG HIM OUTSIDE!

AND WE WHIP HIM OUT ON THE FRONT LAWN...

THEY ARE THE DELUSIONS OF THE BIGOT...THE EXAGGERATIONS OF THOSE WHO DESIRE TO EXAGGERATE...THE CONCEPTIONS OUT OF DARKNESS OF THOSE WHO WOULD THROW US INTO DARKNESS AS THESE MEN NOW PROBE IN DARKNESS...SEARCHING FOR THEIR FANTASY ENEMIES...THE OLIVE SKIN, THE DARK HAIR, THE ACCENT



THERE'S SOMEONE IN HERE?

WHO...WHO'S THERE?

GET HIM! STUFF A BAG IN HIS MOUTH!

WHITE GHOSTS IN THE DARK NIGHT...DRAGGING THEIR VICTIM OUT OF HIS BED...OUT OF THE SECURITY OF HIS HOME...OUT INTO THE DARKNESS...



TIE HIS HANDS BEHIND HIS BACK...

...WHY?

STAND BACK! I'LL DO IT!

THE FICTION OF DIFFERENTLY COLORED SKIN...THE ABILITY OF ODDLY SHAPED FACIAL FEATURES...THE ILLUSION OF STRANGE ACCENTS...THE MYTH OF UNFAMILIAR RELIGIONS...ALL THESE ARE THE FANTASIES OF HATE.



ALL RIGHT! LET'S GO!

BREAK DOWN THE DOOR!

ONE...TWO...THREE...

AND FROM THE DARKNESS, TOO, COME THE SCREAMS OF THE PERSECUTED...THE ANGUISHED CRIES OF PAIN OF THOSE WHO ARE HOUNDED DOWN BY THESE FANTASIES...



YAAAHHHHH...GH...

SET THAT BAG OVER HIS HEAD.

DRAG HIM OUTSIDE!

THE MIDDLE-AGED MAN, THE SLIGHTLY BALDING ONE...THE MAN WITH THE GRIM FACE, NOW HIDDEN BEHIND THE WHITE MASK...THE ONE CALLED ED...THE PERPETRATOR...THE CREATOR OF THE FANTASY...STEPPED FORWARD, UNROLLING HIS STRAP...



I'LL TEACH HIM.

THE STAP... THE WEAPON OF HIS DELUSION... THE REVOLVER OF HIS MATE... THE PUNCTUATOR OF HIS FICION... ROSE AND FELL... AGAIN AND AGAIN... BRINGING DOWN UPON HIS FANTASY THE REALITY OF PAIN...



DIRTY... UHN... LITTLE...
UHN... SPICK...

SAVAGE, WILD, ANGRY ANGRY STROKES FELL UPON A BARRED VICTIM... A VICTIM UNABLE TO DEFEND HIMSELF AGAINST THAT FANTASY... UNABLE TO CRY OUT... UNABLE TO BE HEARD... A VICTIM LIKE ALL VICTIMS OF INTOLERANCE



UHN... UHN... UHN

ALL RIGHT, ED!
THAT'S ENOUGH!

THE WHIP-WIELDER SWUNG OUT, STRIKING THE OBJECTOR ACROSS HIS HOODED FACE, AND THE PAIN WAS FELT BENEATH THE COVERING...



I TOLD
YOU! NO
KISSES!

YOU...
OH...
CRAP!

THE DEJECTION MOVED OFF, WHIMPERING... STUNG BY HIS OWN WORK... SUFFERING THE PAIN OF HIS OWN MISHON. HE'D OBJECTED, YES! BUT HE'D OBJECTED TOO LATE. THE WHIP-WIELDER RETURNED TO HIS VICTIM...



UHN... UHN... UHN

AND THE VICTIM FELL BENEATH THE OMBLAMENT AND LAY STILL AND SLEEPING IN THE COOL GRASS...



ED! HE... HE'S
DEAD!

YOU...
YOU
KILLED
HIM!

SHUT
UP!
LET'S
GO!

THE SCREAM CAME FROM DOWN THE BLOCK. THE FIGURE DARTED TOWARD THEM... THE FIGURE OF A BOY WITH OLIVE SKIN AND BLACK HAIR...



ANY? ANY!

LOOK!

IT'S...
HIM!
OH,
GOD...

THE BOY KNELT BESIDE THE STILL FIGURE AND TENDERLY REMOVED THE SACK AND GAG AND KISSED THE WIDE STAMING EYES AND WHITE DEAD FACE AND HE CRIED QUIETLY...



WE... WE WERE MARRIED... SECRETLY! SHE WAS WAITING FOR ME... TO GET HOME... FROM WORK... SOB...

ANY! ANY! OH LORD! I'VE
KILLED MY
DAUGHTER!

THE
END

SLAUGHTER!

Little Petie Dildo was barely five years old; his voice, when raised in terror, was blood-curdling. His screams of anguish, when he stumbled or cut himself, had been known to strike terror to neighbors miles away, and to set domestic animals to lowing in the fields.

Petie had just come hurtling into the Dildo barn, his raucous voice crescendoing like the wail of a banshee. Tears cascaded from his eyes and his lower lip trembled violently. "O-over to Winsted's place," he screamed. "He's killing all the BABIES!"

Leathery Alfonso Dildo gulped, grabbed his double-barreled shotgun and raised his eyes heavenward. He knew it was bound to come . . . he'd never liked that Winsted feller from the moment he had moved into the valley. Winsted had mean eyes and narrow lips . . . he swung a mighty harsh whip at his draught-horses. A farmer who'd skash at beasts might also be capable to murdering his own three children!

Alfonso Dildo gulped and started off at a resolute gallop, heading toward the Winsted place with little Petie churning along behind him. Across several stone walls the elder Dildo vaulted, his determinations and horror growing with each passing second. "I allus thought Winsted was loony," he thought. "Now he's gone stark, raving mad . . . probably murdering them three kids fer the insurance money!"

At last, with a gasp and a stagger, the two Dildo's sprinted toward the open Winsted barn. One step inside was enough for Alfonso; the sawdust

was swimming in rich red blood, and there was a shattering squeal of agony. Dildo stared with bulging eyes; even as the marfiac raised his axe high overhead he was singing aloud. Then the jagged weapon crashed down with great savagery and a death-shriek hung hideously in the still air. Alfonso knotted his weather-toughened hands to stop his body from trembling. "The BABIES!" little Petie was wailing. "He . . . he's killing them all!"

Dildo felt his flesh crawling with horror. He could stand it no longer: he swung the shotgun up to his shoulder, sighted along its rusted length and pressed the hooked trigger. There was a deafening blast; Winsted whirled as if struck by lightning, spun around so that he faced Dildo in open-mouthed shock, then crumpled forward on his face, sprawling full-length in the bloody sawdust.

Dildo flung away the gun and hurtled forward. The block Winsted had been using for his fiendish slaughter was awash in glistening blood. If only he wasn't too late . . .

A squealing piglet jumped down from the block and zigzagged frantically through Dildo's legs. Alfonso stopped and his eyes almost rolled back in upon themselves so great was his astonishment. There on the floor lay the bodies of Winsted's tiny, defenseless victims . . . the brutally murdered babies he was butchering with such devilish glee. Their flesh was already stiffening, those three little pigs Winsted had been readying for the dinner table . . .

YOU, MURDERER

DON'T YOU REMEMBER? DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW DISMAL AND CHILLY IT WAS LAST NIGHT WHEN YOU WENT OUT FOR A WALK? DON'T YOU REMEMBER THE WHISPY FOG HANGING EARLY HERE AND THERE OVER THE DAMP DESERTED STREET... THE BLOATED MOON APPEARING AND DISAPPEARING IN THE CLOUD-SHROUDED SKY... HOW YOU SHIVERED AND WENT ON? THEN LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT IT. LET ME TELL YOU WHAT HAPPENED.



YOU MADE YOUR WAY ALONG THE DARK, EMPTY STREET, LISTENING TO THE ECHOES OF YOUR FOOTSTEPS BOUNCING OFF THE EXPRESSIONLESS FACES OF THE BUILDINGS, WATCHING YOUR SHADOW RIPPLE AND TWIST AND LENGTHEN AHEAD OF YOU AS YOU MOVED AWAY FROM EACH DIM LAMPPOST...

SURELY YOU RECALL STEPPING OFF THE CURB... YOUR FOOT SLOSHING INTO THE DARK PUDDLE... THE SPLASH, THE BOILING SENSATION AS THE MUDDY WATER RUSHED INTO YOUR SHOE... NOW YOU CURSED ALOUD IN ANNOYANCE...



FOR A LONG WHILE, THERE WASN'T A SOUL IN SIGHT. REMEMBER? AND THEN YOU SAW THE HUNCHER LITTLE FIGURE APPEAR OUT OF THE MISTY GLOOM AHEAD. HE DRAGGED TOWARD YOU... MISCHAPEN... BENT... UNBROKEN.



SOMEONE, INSTINCTIVELY, YOU TRIED TO AVOID HIM, BUT HE TURNED TOWARD YOU WITH A CROOKED, LEERING SMILE. YOU WANTED TO HURRY PAST HIM BUT HE PUT OUT HIS HAND...



I SEE YOUR PARSON? DO YOU HAVE A MATCH, PLEASE?

OH... SURE...

DON'T YOU REMEMBER FUMBLING THROUGH YOUR POCKETS, TAKING OUT THE BOOK OF MATCHES, LIGHTING ONE, AND CLIPPING YOUR HANDS AROUND THE DANCING FLAME AS HE STARED HIS EYELID-SWELLING GEAR INTO IT...



HERE YOU ARE...

MMMM?

AS HE DREW HIS HEAD BACK, YOU DID NOT TOSS THE MATCH TO THE WET SIDEWALK. YOU HELD IT THERE... THE FLAME CRAWLING DOWN THE WAXED CARDBOARD DRAFT. HIS EYES... HIS EYES BLAZED AT YOU IN THE ORANGE GLARE... BLAZED WITH A PECULIAR INTENSITY AND HIS VOICE WAS SOFT AND COMPELLING...

HOW COULD YOU HAVE FORGOTTEN THOSE EYES? DIM. EYES. EVIL EYES. THAT SEEMED TO LOOM LARGER AND LARGER... BURNING, BURNING EYES...



WAIT! DON'T MOVE! LOOK AT ME! LOOK INTO MY EYES!

HUH?



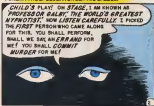
LOOK INTO MY EYES! DON'T TURN AWAY YOU CAN'T TURN AWAY. LOOK DEEP! DEEPER...

AND THE NIGHT SPUN AROUND YOU. THE MIST SWIRLED AND EDDIED AS IN YOUR BRAIN, A MENTAL FOG HOW SWIRLED AND EDDIED. YOUR MIND SANK INTO A SPIRALING POOL... DOWN... DOWN. DESPERATELY YOU TRIED TO SHIELD YOURSELF FROM THOSE FIERCE COMPELLING EYES...

YOU DROPPED YOUR HANDS... OBEDIENTLY... LIKE A STUPID CHILD. HE WAS RIGHT. IT WAS NO USE TRYING TO FIGHT NOW. IT WAS TOO LATE. YOU WERE IN HIS POWER... HELPLESS... UNDER HIS SPELL...



TAKE YOUR HANDS AWAY! PUT THEM DOWN! IT'S USELESS NOW... USELESS TO TRY TO FIGHT...



CHILD'S PLAY! ON STAGE, I AM KNOWN AS PROFESSOR BARRY, THE WORLD'S GREATEST HYPNOTIST. NOW LISTEN CAREFULLY. I PICKED THE FIRST PERSON WHO CAME ALONG FOR THIS. YOU SHALL PERFORM. SHALL WE SAY A HERRAND FOR ME? YOU SHALL COMMIT MURDER FOR ME!

MURDER! EVEN THAT HIDEOUS WORD COULD NOT SHOCK YOU OUT OF YOUR TRANCE. YOU LISTENED, DUMBLE... THOUGH YOUR STOMACH CONVULSED WITH EACH WORD OF HIS DIABOLICAL PLAN...

MY WIFE LEFT ME... FOR ANOTHER MAN... A MAN WITH A TALL, STRAIGHT BODY... NOT LIKE MINE! I WANT REVENGE. NOT NOT BY KILLING HER...



YOU COULD ONLY ANSWER MECHANICALLY... LIKE A PUPPET. YOUR VOICE SOUNDED STRANGE AND FAR AWAY. YOU LISTENED, SOMEWHERE, INSIDE YOU... A REBELLION STARTED...

YOU WILL GO TO HIS GARAGE FIRST! THERE'S AN OLD MUSTING TIRE CHAIN THERE. YOU WILL GET IT. YOU WILL ENTER THE HOUSE AND BEAT HIM TO DEATH WITH THE CHAIN!



...NOW HIS WORDS INFLAMED YOU...

RIGHT AT THIS MOMENT, HE IS ASSEMBLING AN ATOMIC BOMB. HE INTENDS TO BLOW UP THE ENTIRE DOWNTOWN AREA OF THIS CITY. THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE WILL BE KILLED. IT IS YOUR DUTY TO STOP THIS MAN. IT IS YOUR PATRIOTIC DUTY TO KILL HIM WITH THE CHAIN!



BY KILLING HIM... IN FRONT OF HER EYES! HIS NAME IS JOHN STORCH. HE LIVES AT 188 54th AVE. YOU WILL GO THERE... NOW... AND KILL HIM... KILL HIM IN MY PLACE. UNDERSTAND?



Y-YES! I UNDERSTAND!

FOR ONE WONDERFUL MOMENT, YOU ALMOST BROKE FREE OF THE SPELL...

ALL RIGHT! I KNOW! HYPNOTISM CAN NEVER FORCE A SUBJECT TO VIOLATE HIS OWN MORAL CODE... COMMIT A CRIME HE DOES NOT HIMSELF DESIRE TO COMMIT! I KNOW! BUT IF THE CRIME IS SUITABLY DISGUISED, THEN THE SUBJECT CAN BE TRICKED INTO IT!



DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW HIS EYES CAME CLOSER, BORING INTO YOURS WITH PLANNED INTENSITY AS HE USED A NEW DECEPTION TO BIND YOU TO HIS WILL...

FORGET WHAT I SAID BEFORE. FORGET NOW, LISTEN TO THIS! AT 188 54th AVE. YOU WILL FIND A DANGEROUS CRIMINAL... A SFX... A COMMUNIST SFX... A SABOTEUR!



...NOW YOU FELT SUDDENLY ANGRY, DETERMINED! YOU WANTED TO DO THIS THING, AS ANY GOOD AMERICAN WOULD... YOU WERE FASTER NOW...



SFX, KILL HIM BY DUTY...

TEST TEST! IT WILL BE A NOBLE DEED! YOU'LL SAVE YOUR FRIENDS, COUNTLESS INNOCENT LIVES... GIVE HONOR RESPECT YOU'LL BE A HERO!

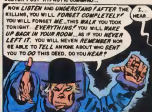
YOU HEARD THE SLOTTING CHUCKLE OF THE HURCHED LITTLE FEND, HIS WICKED WEB-SPINNING NEARLY FINISHED...



WEN? YOU WILL NOT HEAR WHAT I AM SAYING NOW!

YOU'LL BE PULLING MY CHESTNUTS OUT OF THE FIRE. YOU'LL BE KILLING MY WIFE'S LOVER FOR ME... LEAVING YOUR FINGERPRINTS ON THE CHAIR... GOING TO THE ELECTRIC CHAIR IN MY PLACE!

AND THEN, HE COMPLETED HIS WEB OF EVIL WITH HIS CLEVER POST-HYPNOTIC COMMAND...



NOW LISTEN AND UNDERSTAND AFTER THE KILLING, YOU WILL FORGET COMPLETELY! YOU WILL FORGET ME... THIS WALK YOU TOOK TONIGHT... EVERYTHING! YOU WILL WAKE UP BACK IN YOUR ROOM... AS IF YOU NEVER LEFT IT. YOU WILL NEVER REMEMBER NOR BE ABLE TO TELL ANYONE ABOUT WHO SENT YOU TO DO THIS DEED. DO YOU HEAR?

I... HEAR.

THE EVIL STUMPED LITTLE MAN TURNED AWAY, SNEERING...



I WILL COMMIT A MURDER... WITH SOMEONE ELSE'S HANDS AND IF THERE IS SUSPICION... MY ALIBI! THAT GROWDED BARBARD WILL NOT REMEMBER A MAN OF MY FORM SPENDING AN EVENING THERE, DURING THE TIME THE KILLING OCCURED!

BUT HIS WORDS MEANT NOTHING TO YOU, YOUR BRAIN WAS ALREADY BURNING WITH BUT ONE CONSUMING COMPELLING THOUGHT, INFLAMED BY HIS FINAL WORDS AS HE LIMPED AWAY TO THE BAR...



GO, NOW! KILL THAT SPC. BEFORE HE SETS OFF HIS BOMB! GO!

YES... (BBS ONE DRIVE! I... I GO.

DON'T YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU WERE PARTING WHEN YOU REACHED THE ADDRESS HE'D GIVEN YOU? YOU DREPT TO A LIGHTED CELLAR WINDOW, PEERED INSIDE, SAW HIM THERE, WORKING ON THE BOMB...



NOT TO HURRY.

OF COURSE YOU COULD NOT REALIZE HOW THE TWISTED CREATURE WITH THE TWISTED MIND HAD FOOLED YOU... FITTING IT INTO HIS DECEPTION, JOHN STORCH WAS A RADIO REPAIR MAN, THE DANGEROUS 'BOMB' HE WAS TINKERING WITH WAS A T.V. CHASSIS HE'D BROUGHT HOME...



THE GARAGE? THE CHAIR?

YOU STUMBLED TO THE GARAGE... PULLED OPEN THE DOOR QUIETLY... STEPPED INSIDE. THE CHAIR WAS THERE JUST LIKE HE SAID IT WOULD BE. YOU REACHED FOR IT, YOUR HEART POUNDING IN YOUR CHEST...



CHAIN IN HAND, YOU CREEPT CAUTIOUSLY TO A WINDOW... OPENED IT...



DIDN'T YOU REMEMBER HOW YOUR HEART BEAT WILDLY AS YOU CAME DOWN THE CELLAR STAIRS AND YOU WONDERED IF HE'D HEAR THEM CREAKING BENEATH YOUR WEIGHT...



BUT HE WAS TOO ENROBSED IN HIS WORK... HIS DEVILISH WORK, YOU SAW JOHN STORCH, HONEST CITIZEN, AS AN ENEMY AGENT, BENT ON KILLING THOUSANDS. ANGER FLOODED OVER YOU. YOU LASHED THE CHAIN AT HIM LIKE A HEAVY, HEAVY WHIP.



HE TURNED IN SURPRISE... HIS BODY TWITCHING FROM THE STINGING PAIN, HE TRIED TO PLEAD WITH YOU.



BUT YOU DID NOT LISTEN TO HIS LIES... HIS WEAK, FUMBLING PROTESTS. YOU KNEW HIM FOR WHAT HE WAS... A COMMUNIST SPY, A RED AGENT. IT WAS YOUR PATRIOTIC DUTY TO BRING THE CHAIN AGAIN... AND AGAIN... AND AGAIN.



YOU IGNORED THE WOMAN'S SCREAMS... DID NOT HEAR HER FAINT, AND TUMBLE DOWN THE CELLAR STAIRS. YOU FINISHED YOUR JOB AS A LOYAL AMERICAN... BEATING THE BLOODY CHAIN DOWN...



HIS SHRIEKS DIED TO A SUBLIME MOAN... THEN A FINAL DEATH RATTLE. BUT YOU DID NOT STOP. YOU DID NOT STOP SWINGING THE CHAIN UNTIL THE THING ON THE FLOOR WAS NOTHING BUT A MASS OF COOKING SCARLET PULP. THEN YOU FLUNG THE CHAIN AT IT...



THE INCRIMINATING CHAIN... WITH YOUR FINGERPRINTS ALL OVER IT...

As Ye Sow...

YOU STAND SILENTLY, TENSELY, IN THE SHADOWS, AND YOU LISTEN. YOU LISTEN TO THE VOICES AND THEIR SASSY, LOVED WORDS. YOU LISTEN, WHILST THE LIGHT GUST OF COOL NIGHT AIR THAT CARRIES THE FAMILIAR SCENT OF HER PERFUME, YOU LISTEN, BUT THERE ARE NO MORE EAGER, SOFT WORDS... ONLY THE HEATED SOUNDS OF THEIR PASSION. AND YOU KNOW THAT SHE IS IN HIS ARMS... IN THE ARMS OF THIS MAN YOU HATE... THIS MAN YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN... **YOUR WIFE'S EDGER...**

YOUR NAME IS LARRY KINBALL. YOU STAND IN THE STAIR-WELL BESIDE THE OLD BROWNSTONE'S STOOD, AND YOUR SWEATING HAND GRIPS THE SUN IN YOUR POCKET TIGHTER... TIGHTER... AS EACH PAINFUL WORD DRIFTS DOWN TO YOU FROM ABOVE...

I'VE... I'VE GOT TO GO, DEAR. LARRY WILL BE WAITING! PLEASE... LET'S SAY GOOD-NIGHT! PLEASE...

NOT YET, MAMA. COME UP FOR A WHILE... FOR A NIGHT CAP!



I'VE... I'VE GOT TO KILL HIM! I'M LOSING HER, I'M LOSING MY HOME...

ALL RIGHT, DARLING! BUT JUST FOR A LITTLE WHILE...



FOOTSTEPS ABOVE... A DOOR OPENING. YOU RUSH FORWARD, PULLING THE SUN FROM YOUR POCKET. YOU MOUNT THE STEPS TWO AT A TIME, FLING OPEN THE FRONT DOOR AS THE INNER DOOR CLICKS SHUT...

BLAST IT! LOCKED!



YOU LISTEN TO THE FOOTSTEPS FADING AWAY BEHIND THE CURTAINED LOCKED FOYER DOOR. YOU LOOK AROUND PRAGMATICALLY. YOU SEE THE NEAT LINE OF BRASS MAILBOXES WITH THEIR LITTLE BLACK BUTTONS...



YOU PUSH ONE... ANY ONE. YOU WAIT FOR THE UNKNOWN SOMEONE TO ANSWER. AND THEN... THE LONG SHARP IRRITATING BUZZING... THE LOCK CLICKING OPEN... THE DOOR SWINGING WIDE.



YOU STEP INSIDE. THE HALL WITHIN IS DARK AND DESERTED, LINED WITH SILENT DOORS. THE STAIRCASE IS EMPTY, LEADING UP TO MORE SILENT CLOSED DOORS. YOU HESITATE



YOU STAND STIFFLY. ANGRY... FRUSTRATED... BRISTLING THE BUM. YOU'VE MISSED FOUR CHANCES. THE FIFTH OF THEM... YOUR WIFE, NORMA... AND THAT MAN. WHO-EVER HE IS... ARE OF THOSE SOMEWHERE-ALONE...



SOMEONE HAD SEEN YOU. IT'S AN ODD MOM. YOU TURN AND LEAVE, IGNORING HER INSULTS. YOUR CAR IS PARKED DOWN THE BLOCK. YOU'VE FOLLOWED THEM IN IT... FOLLOWED THEM ALL NIGHT... BEEN FOR MEET HIM... SEEN IT ALL. YOU WALK THE SHORT LONELY DISTANCE...



HIS FACE! IF ONLY YOU'D SEEN HIS FACE... COTTEN A GOOD LOOK AT IT. BUT, NO! LOOK HAD BEEN AGAINST YOU ALL EVENING. YOU DRIVE HOME, SLOWLY, CRYING IN/OE



THE HOUSE IS EMPTY AND LONELY WITHOUT NORMA IN IT. LIKE A TOMB... WITH THE DRILL OF DEATH. YOU POUR YOURSELF A DRINK. YOU LOOK AROUND, SILENT...



YOU SIT DOWN IN YOUR FAVORITE CHAIR... THE ONE NORA BOUGHT ESPECIALLY FOR YOU, AND YOU REMEMBER HOW IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING... WHEN YOU WERE FIRST MARRIED... YOU AND NORA, HER TEARS OF HAPPINESS...

IT'S ALL SO WONDERFUL, LAIRD. I'VE NEVER HAD A HOME OF MY OWN!

IT'S NOT QUITE A HOME YET, DEAR. THERE'S FURNITURE TO PICK OUT, AND RUSS...



YOU REMEMBER HER CHILD-LIKE ENTHUSIASM AS SHE MADE PLANS...

AND A MANDARIN TABLE OVER THERE! I WANT EVERYTHING TO BE IN MANDARIN! OH, DARLING... IT'LL BE SO BEAUTIFUL!

I'M SURE IT WILL, BABY... AS LONG AS YOU'RE LIVING IN IT...



IT WAS LESS THAN A YEAR AFTER YOU WERE MARRIED, YOU REMEMBER, THAT NORA BEGAN TO WITHDRAW INTO HERSELF. SHE GREW COOL...

WHAT IS IT, NORA? IS IT SOMETHING I'VE SAID OR DONE?

IT'S NOTHING, LAIRD. I'M JUST... MOODY, I GUESS!



WE COULD GO OUT, NORA. THE BOOTHIE ASKED US TO STOP IN FOR A FEW DRINKS...

THE BOOTHIE... THE GLASSIE... ALL FROM OLD FRIENDS! I'M SICK OF THEM... EVERY NIGHT... NIGHT AFTER NIGHT.



YOU... YOU DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO DO, NORA. YOU NEED AN INTEREST. IF WE HAD CHILD...

NO! NO CHILDREN! I'M NOT READY TO TIE MYSELF DOWN. I'VE GOT SOME LIVING TO DO... A LOT OF LIVING!



YOU RECALL THAT LOOK ON NORA'S FACE, LAIRD. YOU REMEMBER HOW YOU THOUGHT IT WAS JUST ONE OF THOSE MOMENTS... THOSE STRANGE MOODS OF A WOMAN...

BUT THINGS WERE NEVER REALLY THE SAME AFTER THAT NIGHT. I WAS A FOOL NOT TO HAVE RECOGNIZED IT THEN. I THOUGHT IT WAS SUCH A GOOD THING WHEN SHE MADE FRIENDS OF HER OWN... HELEN... AND THOSE OTHERS...



YOU REMEMBER HOW THERE WERE SELDOM ANY NIGHTS AT HOME ALONE TOGETHER AFTER THAT... HOW NORA WOULD WAIT BY THE PHONE...

IT'S... HELEN, LAIRD. WOULD IT BE ALL RIGHT FOR ME TO PLAY BRIDGE WITH HER, TONIGHT?

OH... COURSE, DEAR! YOU... FINE ALONE! I'LL HIT THE HAY EARLY TONIGHT.



YOU REMEMBER HOW HELEN TOOK SIDE... AND YOU THINK BACK TO HOW IT SEEMED THAT SHE WOULD NEVER GET WELL...



YOU REMEMBER THOSE FEW TIMES YOU REACHED THE PHONE BEFORE NORA...AND THERE WOULD BE NO ONE THERE...JUST A CLICK...AND THEN THAT ANKFUL SILENCE...



BUT YOU NEVER SUSPECTED THE TRUTH, DID YOU LAIRD? NOT UNTIL THAT NIGHT, LAST WEEK, WHEN HELEN CALLED...



SO YOU STARTED FOLLOWING NORA AFTER THAT NIGHT, AND YOU SAW HER MEET HIM... BUT YOU NEVER SAW THE MAN CLOSE ENOUGH TO MAKE OUT HIS FACE.



THERE WAS ALWAYS SOME TRICK OF FATE WHICH PREVENTED YOU FROM FOLLOWING THEM... A TRAFFIC LIGHT...A CLOSING SLURRY DOOR...



YOUR FRUSTRATIONS MADE YOU HATE NORA'S LOVER ALL THE MORE. YOU BOUGHT A GUN. YOU FOLLOWED THEM ALL THE WAY TONIGHT...TO THAT BROWNSONE STOOP...



THE DOOR SLAMS. YOUR REVERIE ENDS. NORA HAS RETURNED FROM HER TRYST...



YOU STAND BEFORE HER, AND YOUR HEART BEATS WILDLY... WITH A JEALOUS PASSION... IN YOUR CHEST...

YOU'RE LYING, NORA! MELVIN CALLED HERE A FEW NIGHTS AGO. SHE HADN'T BEEN SHOT. SHE HADN'T EVEN SEEN YOU.

IS THAT SO? ALL RIGHT! SO WHAT?



YOU'D INTENDED NOT TO SAY ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT YOU KNEW, BUT THE TRUTH FORCES ITS WAY THROUGH YOUR AWRY LIPS...

I FOLLOWED YOU TONIGHT, NORA! I SAW YOU GO UP TO HIS APARTMENT! THAT'S WHAT YOU'VE BEEN DOING ALL THESE NIGHTS...

WELL, WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO ABOUT IT?



I'LL KILL HIM, NORA! SO HELP ME DO. I'LL KILL HIM!

YOU? YOU HAVEN'T GOT THE BUTS!

YOU ACHIEVE FOR HER. YOU LONG TO TAKE HER IN YOUR ARMS. ERASE ALL THIS... MAKE IT AS IT WAS SO LONG AGO...

YOU HOPE THAT A NEW DAY WILL MAKE THINGS BETTER... BUT WHAT LITTLE IS LEFT OF YOUR WORLD BLOWS UP IN YOUR FACE THE NEXT MORNING...



NORA... PLEASE...

DON'T TOUCH ME! DON'T COME NEAR ME! I COULDN'T STAND IT!

NORA! WHAT IS THIS YOU'RE FACKING?

I'M GOING AWAY WITH HIM, LAIRD. DON'T TRY TO STOP ME! IT'S NO USE!



PLEASE, NORA! DON'T DO THIS! YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE! DON'T THROW AWAY ALL THIS...

LEAVE ME ALONE, WILL YOU? I KNOW WHAT I'M DOING. I'M LEAVING ON THE EIGHT O'CLOCK TRAIN FOR BRAMI, LAIRD. THE CHAMPION! COME SEE ME OFF... IF YOU LIKE.

HER BRAZEN DEFIANCE... THE WHOLE SORDID AFFAIR. IT SETS YOUR BRAIN AFIRE... AFIRE WITH ONE BURNING IDEA...

GOOD-BYE, LAIRD! IT WAS NICE... WHILE IT LASTED!

I'VE... I'VE GOT TO KILL HIM, NOW! I'VE GOT TO... BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!



YOU START OUT. YOU HAVE THE BULL.
BUT YOU CAN'T FORGET WHAT SHE
SAID LAST NIGHT...



YOU NEED A DRINK... SOMEONE TO
WHOM YOU CAN POUR OUT YOUR
TROUBLES. YOU FIND BOTH IN A
TINY BAR... DOWNTOWN...



YOU DON'T HAVE TO DO IT
YOURSELF, BUS. THERE
ARE BULLS? I COULD
TELL YOU WHERE TO GO
TO HAVE ONE OF 'EM...
WHO TO SEE. BUT IT'LL
COST YOU A FIM...



YOU HURRY TO YOUR BANK. YOU DRAW OUT MONEY.
LOTS OF MONEY. AND YOU GO TO THE ADDRESS
THE STRANGER IN THE BAR GAVE YOU...



GOT A PICTURE OF YOUR WIFE. MY
BOYS'VE GOT TO HAVE SOMETHING
TO GO ON!



YOU HAND HIM THE PICTURE YOU ALWAYS CARRY OF
NORA... BEAUTIFUL... BEAUTIFUL NORA...



HE SHOVS YOU OUT THE DOOR.



YOU GO HOME... AND YOU WAIT. YOU THINK OF WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO WHEN NORA COMES BACK... WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO SAY...

THERE WON'T BE ANYWHERE ELSE FOR HER TO GO. SHE'LL HATE ME FOR A WHILE. THEN, THINGS WILL BE LIKE THEY WERE...

WHEN THE TIME COMES NEAR, YOU LEAVE YOUR APARTMENT, WALK DOWN THE HALL...

I'VE GOT TO ESTABLISH AN ALIBI... PROVE I WAS HOME AT 8 P.M... FIND A RELIABLE WITNESS...

YOU RING YOUR NEIGHBOR'S BELL...

AND AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT, THE STORES ARE ALL CLOSED... SO IF YOU COULD HELP ME OUT, I'D BE SO GRATEFUL...

A LIGHT BULB, KIMBALL? YOU CAN BORROW ONE? I'LL GET IT...



YOU SIT IN YOUR ROOM, FINGERING THE LIGHT BULB. THE CLOCK STRIKES EIGHT. YOU BEM. IN YOUR MIND'S EYE, YOU SEE THE KILLER SPOTTING NO RA... FOLLOWING HER TO HER LOVER...

NORA STANDS IN THE OPEN DOORWAY, BARE IN HANES, HER EYES FILLED WITH TEARS. SHE DROPS HER BAGGAGES AND RUSHES INTO YOUR EAGER WAITING ARMS...

LAIRD... BOB...

HUNT! NORA! BABY!



OH, LAIRD! I'VE BEEN SUCH A SILLY FOOL! I REALIZED IT AT THE FRAME! IT'S YOU I LOVE, CARLINS... YOU I'LL ALWAYS LOVE. I KNOW THAT NOW. CAN YOU EVER FORGIVE ME?

OH, NORA! NORA! OF COURSE I FORGIVE YOU! I... LOVE... YOU.



YOU LOOK UP. YOU SEE HIM THERE... HIS ICEY FACE, HIS GOLD EYES... THE BLACK MUZZLE OF THE GUN POINTING AT YOU...

THE EXPLOSION, ECHOING THROUGH THE APARTMENT. THE STINGING PAIN IN YOUR CHEST. THE DRILL OF DEATH THAT SWEEPS OVER YOU AS YOU SINK TO THE FLOOR... AND NORA'S VOICE, SOBING...

WE'LL HAVE BABIES, LAIRD. LOTS OF BABIES! AND I'LL... I'LL...

NO! WAIT! DON'T! IT'S ALL RIGHT, NOW! IT'S ALL RIGHT! I'M...



LAIRD! LAIRD, MY DEAREST! DON'T DIE! PLEASE DON'T DIE! OH, BOO... BOO...



THESE ARE THE LAST THINGS YOU HEAR, LAIRD KIMBALL, BEFORE... THE END...